

**REMARKS BY
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**BEFORE THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
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Let me thank Bill Millar and everyone here at APTA for the invitation to speak today, particularly along side my FTA partner Peter Rogoff.

Certainly FRA and FTA have so much more to coordinate today than we did 18 months ago.

I'd like to talk about the future of rail – freight and passenger – and the Federal Railroad Administration's role in balancing America's transportation landscape.

I'll focus on three key things: our National Rail Plan, our HSR program, and Rail safety.

As many of you may know, I come out of the ranks as a commuter conductor working for Metra in Chicago. So the issues that affect you are very close to me.

Let me begin by applauding this Administration's foresight. Previous executive branch leadership gave rail short shrift and overlooked rail's many benefits in moving both goods and people.

But, President Obama came into office and realized the role that rail could play as part of a balanced transportation network.

He understood the value of multi-modalism and the advantages in that rail can have in certain markets in reducing fuel utilization, congestion, and noxious emissions.

Our mission now is to ensure our freight rail system grows – and remains the best in the world – as our passenger rail system offers travelers a real alternative to auto and air travel.

With the Recovery Act, the President provided the largest national investment ever in passenger rail, beginning what is a transformational time at FRA.

To fully realize his vision we are beginning with the creation of a National Rail Plan, which we will complete on schedule later this summer.

As part of the plan's formulation, we're actively engaging various industry and transportation stakeholders to help us plan for how rail – passenger and freight – assumes its rightful role as part of a balanced transportation system.

It's a multi-agency effort.

We're working with Transit, Highways, Maritime, Aviation – to help fit the pieces together so goods or people can seamlessly flow from one mode to the next, utilizing the mode that is most efficient for a particular part of a journey.

The National Rail Plan will focus on the overall transportation picture for the coming decades, including the relationship between states and the federal government regarding future rail development.

And this is a key point. The role of the states will be critical, as states are the ones who design and implement most transportation projects, so the National Rail Plan will offer guidance on the development of State Rail Plans.

And it will look at the building of technical capacity for all stake holders – the rail industry itself, state DOTs, FRA – as this industry is graying together at a time when the need for skills are growing.

The plan will offer our thoughts on improving rail safety and how to meet Department-wide goals, including the creation of livable communities, increasing transportation options, and reducing congestion.

We are also excited to present our views about where high-speed passenger rail fits into this larger equation.

To be sure, high-speed rail is not – by itself – the answer to our transportation challenges. But, it is a key part of creating a balanced transportation system that is more efficient.

And of course, HSR must integrate seamlessly with commuter rail and transit to deliver passengers to their final destination.

We envision the \$8 billion in grants that were announced last month to be the down payment – a first step – in a multi-decade partnership with states to improve existing passenger rail lines and create new ones that meet the needs of consumers.

It is through this partnership with states where we will ultimately be successful. Two new rounds of additional funding will be announced the end of this month.

We'll be announcing availability of \$50 million worth of 80/20 matching planning grants for inter-city passenger rail and also \$65 million of 50/50 matching project grants.

And availability of approximately \$2.5 billion of 80/20 matching grants for high-speed intercity rail projects will be announced later this spring.

So, states will need to provide the ongoing financial backing, political leadership, and sound operational plans necessary to see these large projects through to completion.

And FRA will be a key member of the partnership.

We have initiated a “Fast Track” program to coordinate with states those projects that are ready-to-go, and move them out quickly so construction can start this year.

While FRA transforms itself into a grant-making agency, our core mission is – and always will be – safety.

So let me talk about the issues facing you as commuter operations.

The largest of course is Positive Train Control implementation, followed by passenger Hours of Service reforms.

As you know, PTC plans are to be submitted to FRA by April 16 – roughly one month from now – and implemented by December 31, 2015.

We are holding firm to those deadlines and are committed to meeting our 90-day requirement for review and approval of the plans.

But we also understand that this is a heavy lift for you and there is a great deal of concern from publicly funded commuter operations as to how to pay for it.

FRA and FTA are committed to work together to see how we might be able to help.

As you I’m sure you’re aware, the RSIA contained new hours of service requirements for freight railroads, but left the old hours of service in effect for passenger railroads for up to three years.

I’m pleased to tell you that we are on track to meet our deadline of new passenger requirements before the expiration of that three-year window.

We are looking at a performance based passenger hours of service regime that is verifiable and based upon fatigue science.

In essence, passenger assignments would be analyzed with a validated fatigue model and be required to achieve a predetermined fatigue score.

Those assignments that don't reach the threshold score would need to be changed or be mitigated using some of the tools specified in the railroad's fatigue mitigation plan.

Each passenger railroad would submit a fatigue mitigation plan to FRA for approval and that plan would specifically need to address how to manage extra list employees.

FRA would audit and verify compliance with the fatigue mitigation plan.

Let me close by coming back to vision.

In our FY2011 budget request, FRA is seeking \$2.9 billion to support HSR, Amtrak and rail safety programs.

This will allow us to continue FRA's strong safety mission and highlights the Administration's vision to transform the nation's intercity passenger rail system.

Certainly the President's vision for expanding the role of rail is a large undertaking.

Large national endeavors – like the interstate highway system, the Apollo missions to the moon, or the creation of our National Parks – are visionary propositions that required years of work and often uncertain funding.

But, when completed, the benefits of these big initiatives have consistently yielded enormous benefits.

So let's have this level of vision and excitement as we work together to achieve America's rail renaissance.

I hope that you will join with my DOT colleagues and me in bringing the President's vision to reality.